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Memorandum of conversation between Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson, Ambassador Gavin, Ambassador Finletter and General Norstadt at the United States Embassy, Paris, France, Sept. 30, 1961.

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which he
has been
wanted
to take*
1. General Norstadt opened the discussion with a description of ~~planned countermeasures~~ in the event the Soviets or the East Germans seek to deny allied air access to Berlin. ~~He said he had an agreement with the British to take such countermeasures on his own initiative. The French, he said, desired to have such steps taken only after the issue was referred back to the respective Allied governments. Nevertheless, General Norstadt said that he intended to act under his agreement with the British should the communists seek to force the issue in the air corridors.~~
 2. General Norstadt then discussed the ~~division of Berlin by the communists. He said he felt that if he were the military commander on the scene, he would have strung a hook across the barbed wire when it was erected attached the hook by a rope to a jeep and torn down the wire. He also stated that he would have felt justified under the same circumstances in battering down the Berlin wall with a tank. However, he said he did not believe orders to take such action could be delivered by a government to a local commander.~~
 3. General Norstadt expressed great concern over the situation in Steinstuecken, a small section in East Berlin under allied control. He said that Steinstuecken acts as a "magnet" attracting refugees from East Berlin. He said he had given approval to a helicopter flight of a group of refugees from Steinstuecken to West Berlin and anticipated another request for similar approval of another helicopter delivery of refugees within a few days. Meanwhile, he continued, the communists have intensified their guard around Steinstuecken and there was a distinct possibility that patrols would fire at the next helicopter that attempted a rescue. General Norstadt said he had rejected a request by General Clay last Sunday for a motor convoy from West Berlin to Steinstuecken as a means of asserting allied access rights. General Norstadt said that maintaining allied rights to Steinstuecken and probing communist intentions in regard to the territory presented very high risks of launching a war. He said that if the United States government decided, as a policy matter, to take such risks he would go along with

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the decision. But meanwhile, he said, there should be some thinking about the problem and a policy determination.

3. General Norstadt^{here} said he had been opposed to the sending of the Vice President to Berlin along with a battle group because he thought such steps should be saved to a later date as part of a calculated "build up" program in the "war of nerves". As the situation now stands, he said, another morale crisis in Berlin could be solved only by sending the President himself because "we have committed our reserves and I believe committed them too early." He said he believed that General Clay should have been sent first and the Vice President sent upon the next occasion of a slump in morale. He described the Vice President's mission as a "tremendous success" but thought it should have been saved for a time of greater urgency. He said he had communicated these views to Washington but had received no response.
4. General Norstadt expressed great admiration for General Clay and said he was "the right man" for Berlin. But he said that as he understood the matter, Clay had no authority and his presence in Berlin complicated an already complicated administrative problem. (At this point, General Norstadt had to leave in order to keep an appointment.)
5. ~~General~~ Ambassador Gavin remarked that he did not see "how Clay can be effective without authority from the President to get things done." He said he thought General Clay should have "political authority" in Berlin but agreed that General Norstadt should have authority over NATO military action.
6. In response to a question, Ambassador Finletter said the administrative complications flowing from General Clay's presence in Berlin might be one of the reasons for a forthcoming trip to the United States by General Norstadt. He remarked, however, that General Norstadt has "diplomatic and political skill" and the ability to resolve complex administrative and personality questions.
7. Vice President Johnson then told Ambassadors Gavin and Finletter that there is a widespread feeling in the United States that America's allies are NOT putting as much into the defenses against communism as they should. He went over a document prepared by the Secretary of Defense which indicated that America's allies had not fulfilled any of their important commitments completely and asked how public criticisms on this point could be answered. These criticisms, he added, have reached a point where legislation to back vital programs was in grave danger.

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8. Ambassador Finletter said that General Norstadt was expressing himself "quite optimistically" on the NATO buildup. He listed Greece and Turkey as being financially unable to do more than they are now doing; Portugal as unwilling to act because of the Angola dispute; Norway and Denmark as "the bad ones"; and Germany as doing everything it could "short of mobilizing." However, he conceded that most of the progress is in terms of "commitments" rather than performance. Greece and Turkey he described as "on the flank" of the allied defensive position and he said he was more interested in the "central front" where only Denmark and Norway represents a "weakness". He said that Danish and Norwegian memories of the German occupation was still so fresh that it was difficult "to get them worried about Berlin." Furthermore, he said, it is difficult to explain to Europeans the need for a conventional buildup in arms after the United States has stood on the concept of massive nuclear retaliation for so many years. ~~Finally, he said that most Europeans do not believe that Berlin is the main crisis and expect the crisis to come next year in the former German zone or other location.~~ But he expressed optimism on the European buildup and left with the Vice President a memorandum outlining the steps ~~have~~ been taken by the European allies to improve their contribution to NATO. He said the best way to handle criticism in the United States was to have General Norstadt make some statements on the subject.

9. General Gavin also expressed optimism. But he cautioned that "leadership is a lonely thing" and that it is not surprising that European Nations are not putting as much into NATO as the United States. He described France as "probably the strongest ally we have in Europe" and said that General De Gaulle had anticipated the problem of the military buildup and ~~he~~ had started to take steps a year ago to meet it. He said that De Gaulle was "trying to get out of Algeria as fast as possible" so France will have more troops to commit to NATO. He stated also that he, personally, favored a "steady, slow buildup" over a fast buildup spurred by a military crisis which might collapse with the collapse of the crisis.

10. Ambassador Finletter said that in his judgment the NATO alliance itself is more important "than the buildup". He said that Khrushchev's major objective in Berlin had been to smash the alliance but this ~~crisis had been not and~~ ~~achieved~~. The European allies, he said, "now think the United States has leadership and they are willing to go along."

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had not been achieved,